



The Journey

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BASED ON A STORY FOUND ON THE WEBSITE MINISTRY MATTERS

This week I read a story that Governor Andrew Cuomo described as “humanity at its best.” This referred to a simple handwritten letter with one brand-new N95 mask included in the envelope sent from a small-town farmer in rural Kansas. In his letter, Dennis Ruhnke shared how he and his wife, Sharon, have been sheltering-in-place while dealing with fears of Covid-19 affecting Sharon’s already poor health. As a farmer, Dennis possessed five N95 masks, which he acquired for cleaning out a grain bin. While his family of four was now using those masks to stay healthy, he knew that a health-care worker needed his unused mask. So, instead of discarding it, he mailed it to Governor Cuomo along with a note expressing the simple desire that it be passed on to a nurse or doctor in New York.

Ruhnke’s actions did not go unnoticed. His letter went viral on social media and was brought to the attention of the president of Kansas State University. For his generous act, and in light of four decades of agricultural work, KSU awarded Mr. Ruhnke a bachelor’s degree in agriculture, which he was only two credits shy of completing in 1971.

When interviewed later as to why he sent the mask, Ruhnke responded: “I would have felt terrible if I threw it away, but it made me feel pretty good to send it on to somebody who might be able to use it. So I thought, it was just one little gesture. But maybe if you get enough of these little gestures, it will all come out for the better in the end.”

In the last few days I have had a great deal of conversations with people who are worn out. They have been dealing with the COVID-19 crisis for months and are struggling with the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor that have once again shed light on the injustices faced by people of color in America. They feel defeated, wondering how they can make a difference in the world and how they can cope with issues that seem insurmountable. I believe that Dennis Ruhnke gives us an example to follow. We start with little gestures, small acts of kindness that may not seem to be important to us, but could mean the world to others.

In Matthew 10 Jesus reminded the disciples that even receiving a cup of cold water from a stranger is a meaningful gesture and a powerful way to offer blessing to another. It is my belief that these acts of kindness eventually begin to snowball and they will become more powerful as time passes. They will unite us, bringing us closer to one another and to God. Then together we will see that these kind acts are not small, instead they are a reminder of the goodness of humanity, the basic belief that we can become better by living in the image of Christ and treating all people as the beloved of God. What acts of kindness can you share today? How can you show the world humanity at its best? Amen.

Deadline for the *Journey* is **Thursday, July 2**, at Noon. Email to: publisher@fcc-hsv.org

3209 Whitesburg Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35802 Telephone: 256-881-0150 **Leave a message.**

Online Sunday Worship Services: 8:15 & 10:30 a.m. (Where to stream following page)

SMALL GROUP MEETINGS AT CHURCH

Starting Monday, June 22nd, small groups will be allowed to start meeting inside the Church building in **Family Services**. At this time we can only allow **one meeting a day ending before 5:00 PM** since we will have a professional cleaning company sanitize the room each evening. The schedule for using the Family Services room will be kept in the office. We will also ask you to use the outside Family Services doors, located in our Bell Tower Courtyard on the west side of the church, to enter the building. The door will be unlocked for your meeting.

We ask that:

- You follow social distancing procedures.
- The meeting has less than 10 people.
- You record the names of all participants.
- All participants will wear a mask.
- And that you clean after the meeting with provided supplies.

TEMPORARY OFFICE ENTRANCE

Our Early Childhood Ministry has re-opened and will temporarily be using the north entrance to the church (by the office) exclusively for health safety reasons. You must use the exterior office door, approximately 40 feet to the left of the north entrance as you face the building, for church-related access. There is a doorbell button to press. Currently the office is closed from 12:30 - 1:30.

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES

Stream live at 10:30 am on Sundays (or watch previous services anytime) on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/channel/UCzQCRY8Vfa-IDhuqUnUhCKw

You may also stream services live on Sundays at 10:30 am (and see announcements throughout the week) on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/fchsv/

Finally, stream services at 8:15 and 10:30 am on Sunday at: www.twitch.tv/fchsv

WEEKLY PRAYER CONCERNS

Not Published Online

REGIONAL PRAYER REQUEST

First Christian Church
Hartselle, AL

We are temporarily publishing, as space allows in the printed version of the *Journey*, the prayer concerns that are usually listed in the Sunday bulletins. Concerns are listed for one month unless we receive an update. Long term prayer concerns are published monthly in the *Journey*. Send requests to publisher@fcc-hsv.org or call the church office at 256-881-0150 and leave a message.

Please notify the Pastors or the church office if you are going to the hospital and would like to be contacted

THIS WEEK'S FOOD BASKET is in honor of Howard McSpadden, Anita's father, by Randy & Anita Wood.

JUNE 21 DRIVE IN WORSHIP

Even with the threat of a storm, 29 people participated in our first drive-in service! Join us this Sunday, June 28, at the next 8:15 drive-in service.

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

The Community Outreach Committee's project for June is collecting financial donations for the Foster Care Unit of DHR (Department of Human Resources). There are over 400 children in foster care in Madison County and funding is not adequate to cover all their needs. These children are in care through no fault of their own; they have been abused and neglected by those who should have protected them. Community Outreach, with your help, would like to give the Foster Care Unit \$25 Walmart gift cards to have on hand to use throughout the year to help our children who are suffering physically, mentally, and emotionally. A check can be made to FCC with "CO gift cards" in the memo line and mailed to the church. Thank you for caring about the vulnerable children in our community.



FCC COURTYARD GARDEN

GREAT TURNOUT FOR CHURCH WORK DAY IN THE "YARD"

Nine church members attended last weekend's workday to pull weeds, prune plants, and spread mulch. We worked on the islands, the Belltower Gardens, the beds around the main church sign on Whitesburg Drive, the west end of McMains, and the azalea bed on the north side of McMains Hall. We saved the church over \$800 in cost to hire our landscape team to do all of this work.

Those who worked included: Bev Cannon, Dick Christiansen, Don Coburn, Duffy Boles, Mary Ann Anderson, Gayle Herber, Lynn Abernathy, Margaret Vann, and Bob Senn.

There will be another workday on Saturday, June 27, from 8 AM - 11 AM. Please reply to publisher@fcc-hsv.org if you will be able to help so we will have a headcount on the number of people to expect. Remember to wear a mask and practice physical distancing.



THE NEW PULPIT HAS ARRIVED!

Continued Below

DEVOTIONAL

Overwhelmed by Steve Harper

One of the greatest dangers in life is to feel overwhelmed. Many of us have felt that way during the pandemic. But even before it, we found it easy to feel overwhelmed in a world of enormous challenges, and in a time that includes a never-ending spate of negativity and toxicity, much of which goes against the grain of our deepest values and too often promotes the destruction of life and an erosion of what it means to be human.

If we have an ounce of compassion in our being, we are naturally drawn into the effort to resist evil and promote good, seeking to be “instruments of peace” in situations that are bereft of it. Each of us does this through various means and in differing degrees. But none of us can do it relentlessly or indefinitely. If we try to be “all in all the time,” burnout and bitterness are inevitable. Fatigue (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) emerges, spiraling downward into frustration which eventually turns into a sense of futility. It is what St. Paul called “growing weary in well doing” (Galatians 6:9).

This descent into darkness is so strong that we must exercise willful resistance to it. We must cultivate our spiritual life in relation to the pattern of engagement/abstinence. [1]. It is the pattern we first see in creation, where God worked but also rested. It is the pattern we see in Jesus (Luke 5:15-26), in his formation of disciples (Mark 6:31), and thereafter across the centuries through the witness of the saints. [2]

We must cultivate the pattern of stepping away, even from good things. It is possible to drown in clean water as much as it is in dirty water. It is not the quality of the water, but it's being over our heads that does us in. The disciplines that enable us to survive what someone has called, “the feverish round of unceasing activity” are Sabbath keeping, solitude, silence, meditation and simplicity.

The overarching word for it is *fasting*. But as Richard Foster has taught, it is fasting from more than food. Today, I believe that the essential non-food fast is from our devices - from the tumultuous onslaught of social media. It not only never stops, it also is designed to keep us stirred up and reactive. It upsets us. This is not healthy, and over the long haul it is deformative. At the extreme, it is an addiction as hard to break as any other. We must fast from the media.

But there are other things we need to fast from; in fact, there are many - too many to name. We find them in our lives wherever we feel “consumed” by something. Fasting in this sense is stepping back from anything that has us in its grip. Most of the time, we can identify these things and exercise our wills to be free of them. At other times, we need spiritual direction to see them and deal with them. And on some occasions, we need professional counseling to overcome the things which are overwhelming us. Any means to freedom is a means of grace.

But any practice of the discipline of abstinence must be in the context of the larger pattern of engagement/abstinence, so that our actions are rooted in and are expressions of the natural rhythm of our life. In spiritual formation there is a deeper question than, “What are you doing?” It is the question. “How are you intending to live?” We are helped by good actions in a given moment, but we are shaped by the intentions we establish underneath them. The engagement/abstinence pattern is a formative intention. It is the sacred rhythm of life that prevents us from becoming overwhelmed.

[1] I first saw this pattern in Dallas Willard’s book, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, in which he organized the spiritual disciplines to show how they establish the action/reflection cycle in our lives.

[2] I have observed and studied this pattern in the lives of many ancient and modern Christians, e.g. the early desert mothers and fathers, Sts. Francis and Clare, John Wesley, E. Stanley Jones, Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen, Susan Muto, and Richard Rohr — to name a few.